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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to identify the competencies needed by training professionals as perceived by those currently employed as professionals in training. Its purpose was to provide data useful in curriculum development. The sample consisted of the membership of two local chapters of the American Society for Training and Development in central Illinois. A mailed questionnaire asked respondents to rank the importance of 34 competencies and to identify additional competencies they perceived as being important. Data from the 82 returned questionnaires (42 percent) indicated that more than 50 percent of the respondents ranked five competencies as extremely useful: oral communication skills, written communication skills, group facilitation skills, platform presentation skills, and needs assessment skills. Respondents ranked six competencies as not very important to training professionals: computer-assisted instruction, facility selection/design, design and production of graphics, interactive video, research design, and research reports. (The instrument is appended.) (YLB)

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Needed Training Competencies and University Offerings:  
Designing a Good Match

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## INTRODUCTION

Few people would question statements indicating that the field of training is growing, but many would be surprised by some of the recently published figures related to the actual size and importance of this field. Employee training by employers is the largest delivery system for adult education, with an annual budget of \$210 billion (compared to a total \$238 billion annual budget for elementary, secondary and higher education). (Workplace Learning..., 1987) Of that amount, \$30 billion was spent on formal employee training and about \$180 billion on informal training including on-the-job training. Training provides most skills acquired after age 25 and accounts for 85% of the variation of lifetime earnings. (Training..., 1987)

Employers are clearly demonstrating their recognition of training as an important component of effective competition in today's marketplace. Eighty-nine percent of our largest companies have designated a chief human resource executive at the corporate level and in the last six years, there has been a 38% increase in the number of people assigned to corporate training responsibilities on a full-time basis. Six out of ten employers have started new training programs in the last two years. (Training..., 1987) The reasons most commonly mentioned for this rapid growth are the changing demographics in our nation and the continuing rapid rate of technological change in our society.

With the growth in training has come an increasing need for trained professionals to design and implement that training. The on-the-job learning, once the norm in the field of training, is no longer sufficient to meet the needs of most organizations today. Employers now seek employees who possess the skills and competencies needed by training

professionals. Not surprisingly, there has been a marked increase in the number of programs in training offered by higher education institutions. In 1976, the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) compiled a list of 36 universities, colleges, junior colleges and institutes which offered programs in training and development. (Fresina and Kerr, 1977) The 1983 ASTD listing of such programs identified 73 programs at the master's level alone with an emphasis in training and development. (Venable, 1985)

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of this project was to identify the competencies needed by training professionals as perceived by those currently employed as professionals in training. It was undertaken to provide data which would be useful in curriculum development.

#### RELATED RESEARCH

The 1983 ASTD study Models for Excellence identified thirty-one specific knowledge-skill areas which are important for excellent performance in the training and development field (Appendix A). The study also delineated fifteen key training roles frequently performed and 102 critical outcomes essential to the effective performance of those roles. Additionally, it described the jobs of people in training as usually consisting of a mix of roles both within and outside the training and development field. (ASTD, 1983)

Eaves' study focused on the identification of core role elements which exist across all areas in which adult education exists. Unlike his predecessors, he included within his analysis studies focused upon training and development. Using existing data bases from studies by Bunning and Rossman

(1978) and Pinto and Walker (1978), he established a role construct for a trainer, consisting of functional areas, factors, and activities. He then went on to identify competencies needed for the role of trainer (Table 1). Using data from Daniel and Rose (1982) and the two studies mentioned above, found that needed competencies fell into four major clusters: (1) adult development; (2) adult learning/instruction; (3) programming; and, (4) management. (Evans, 1985).

Venable and Quinn used the ASTD Directory of Academic Programs in Training & Development/HRD 1983 to develop a matrix of such programs by level. Their matrix identified 73 programs at the master's level with an emphasis in training and development. These programs included a great deal of diversity, including such areas as educational technology, media, organizational psychology, organizational development, instructional science, industrial education, adult education, counseling and guidance, human resources, and instructional training techniques. (Venable, 1985).

A study by Husted at Indiana State University for the purpose of curriculum development in training and development used the thirty-one competencies from the ASTD study to identify existing courses in business and education which might be useful in preparing training professionals. When local ASTD members were surveyed regarding their responses to the proposed curriculum, they were supportive. Additionally, 86.2% of the respondents indicated a belief that a broad-based business undergraduate program is needed to prepare professionals for the training field. (Husted, 1985).

Ralphs and Stephan's Survey of human resource departments in Fortune 500 companies gave some insights into current practice and future expectations of training professionals in large American companies. It provided data on kinds of training currently being done and methods currently in

Table 1

## Compatible Knowledge and Skill Variables for Most Frequently Performed Activities

BUNNING & ROSSMAN	DANIEL & ROSE	PINTO & WALKER
<u>ADULT DEVELOPMENT</u>		
knowledge of adult development	knowledge of adult development	apply concepts of adult development
knowledge of adult characteristics	knowledge of adult characteristics	
knowledge of changing nature of the adult	knowledge of changing nature of the adult	
<u>ADULT LEARNING/INSTRUCTION</u>		
knowledge of adult learning theory	knowledge of adult learning theory	apply adult learning theory/instruc.
knowledge of adult ed., principles	knowledge of adult ed. principles	use of discussion techniques
knowledge of behavior of individual, group	knowledge of behavior of individual, group	use of lecture technique
skill in conducting learning exper.	skill in conducting learning exper.	evaluate instructional methods
skill in communicating	skill in communicating	conducting training activities
skill in motivating others	skill in motivating others	counseling with employees
skill as a competent instructor	skill as a competent instructor	develop materials
skill as a teacher trainer	skill as a teach trainer	
skill in the use of ed. technology	skill in the use of ed. technology	
<u>PROGRAMMING</u>		
knowledge of program design	knowledge of program design	design specific programs
knowledge of program implementation	knowledge of program implementation	conduct training programs
knowledge of planning techniques	knowledge of planning techniques	determine program content
skill in diagnosing educa. needs	skill in diagnosing educa. needs	establish program objectives
skill in systematic inquiry, etc.	skill in systematic inquiry, etc.	identifying needs
knowledge of evaluation	knowledge of evaluation	project future needs
skill in evaluating products	skill in evaluating products	evaluate needs for priorities
knowledge of change process	knowledge of change process	analyze performance problems
<u>MANAGEMENT</u>		
skill as a change agent	skill as a change agent	revise based on evaluation
skill in gaining cooperation	skill in gaining cooperation	determine program structure
skill in communicating	skill in communicating	
knowledge of behavior in org.	knowledge of behavior in org.	
skill in fiscal aspects	skill in fiscal aspects	
skill in management of programs	skill in management of programs	
skill in organizational renewal	skill in organizational renewal	

Eaves, Thomas A., "Trainer Competencies: An Examination of Existing Research," paper, National Adult Education Conference, Milwaukee, WI, November, 1985, p. 15.

use. Technical training amounted to 44% of all training in the companies responding, and such training was expected to grow in the next one to three years by 74%. In-house seminars and on-the-job coaching were the most important methods used for most kinds of training. Computer assisted instruction and interactive video were not found to be a major force in training programs. (Ralphs and Stephan, 1986)

#### POPULATION AND SAMPLE

Since the purpose of this study was to provide data on training competencies as perceived by training professionals which would be useful in curriculum development, the population was identified as all training professionals within central Illinois. Given the difficulty of identifying all members of the population, a sample consisting of the membership of the two local chapters of ASTD was used. The two chapters' combined membership was 193. The majority of businesses represented by the sample are small and medium sized organizations.

#### METHODOLOGY

A mailed questionnaire was used to collect data. A variety of sources were used in the development of the questionnaire. Fifteen schools were selected from those identified in Venable's study as offering programs in training for further examination because they appeared to be offered by institutions with similarities to Illinois State University. College catalogs from those schools were reviewed to identify program structure and course content as indicated by catalog descriptions. This data, along with competencies identified in the Eaves study and the ASTD study was used to develop the list of 34 competencies included in the questionnaire. The list was intentionally kept short to encourage recipients to respond.

Space was provided for respondents to identify additional competencies which they thought to be important. A four position scale, ranging from "Extremely Useful" to "Of Little or No Use" was provided for response. Respondents were also asked to identify their current training responsibilities. The questionnaires were mailed with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and a postpaid, addressed return envelope. Copies of the cover letter and questionnaire may be found in Appendices B and C.

## FINDINGS

Eight-two questionnaires (42%) were returned within the allowed time period. The raw data from the questionnaires was first tallied, (Figure 1), then percentages were calculated for each of the answer categories. Surface examination of the percentage distribution of responses in Figure 2 indicates that five competencies were ranked as extremely useful by more than 50% of the respondents. They were,

- Oral communication skills
- Written communication skills
- Group facilitation skills
- Platform presentation skills
- Needs assessment techniques

Six competencies received no rankings in the "Of little or no use" category, including all of the above except written communication skills plus skill and knowledge assessment techniques and evaluation techniques. A scalar value, ranging from three points for "Extremely Useful" to zero for the last category, was used to calculate mean scores for the responses to each competency.

Figure 1Desirable Competencies for Trainers - Raw Data

	Extremely Useful	Useful	Somewhat Useful	Of little or No Use
1. Learning theory	20	41	19	2
2. Adult learning theory	40	33	8	1
3. Adult development	17	31	28	6
4. Program design process (overview)	31	37	13	1
5. Needs assessment techniques	44	32	6	0
6. Curriculum design	26	42	13	1
7. Knowledge of organizational structures	21	32	26	3
8. Skill and knowledge assessment techniques	36	36	10	0
9. Evaluation techniques	39	35	8	0
10. Budgeting techniques	8	38	28	8
11. Writing educational objectives	27	37	16	2
12. Platform presentation skills	49	24	9	0
13. Group facilitation skills	55	25	2	0
14. Development of educational materials	37	34	9	2
15. Computer based training	13	28	35	6
16. Computer assisted instruction	9	30	34	9
17. Interactive video	5	32	33	12
18. Selection of media	20	34	27	1
19. Use of AV equipment	18	34	25	5
20. Design and production of graphics	6	29	37	10
21. Management skills	26	39	13	4
22. Oral communication skills	69	10	3	0
23. Written communications skills	57	21	3	1
24. Cost-benefit analysis	10	36	28	8
25. Facility selection/design	2	40	35	5
26. Research design	1	18	51	12
27. Research reports	4	13	48	17
28. Applications of theory to training	17	41	19	5
29. Program administration	11	43	24	4
30. Long-range planning	17	40	23	2
31. Marketing strategies/techniques	18	33	24	7
32. Development of written simulations, role plays, case studies	26	41	13	2
33. Development of training manuals	26	42	12	2
34. Facilitating the application of training content	37	29	11	5

Figure 2

**Desirable Competencies for Trainers**  
**Percentage Distribution of Responses**

	Extremely Useful	Useful	Somewhat Useful	Of little or No Use
1. Learning theory	24.4%	50.0%	23.2%	2.4%
2. Adult learning theory	48.8	40.2	9.8	1.2
3. Adult development	20.7	37.8	34.1	7.3
4. Program design process (overview)	37.8	45.1	15.9	1.2
5. Needs assessment techniques	53.7	39.0	7.3	0
6. Curriculum design	31.7	51.2	15.9	1.2
7. Knowledge of organizational structures	25.6	39.0	31.7	3.7
8. Skill and knowledge assessment techniques	43.9	43.9	12.2	0
9. Evaluation techniques	47.6	42.7	9.8	0
10. Budgeting techniques	9.8	46.3	34.1	9.8
11. Writing educational objectives	32.9	45.1	19.5	2.4
12. Platform presentation skills	59.8	29.3	11.0	0
13. Group facilitation skills	67.1	30.5	2.4	0
14. Development of educational materials	45.1	41.5	11.0	2.4
15. Computer based training	15.9	34.1	42.7	7.3
16. Computer assisted instruction	11.0	36.6	41.5	11.0
17. Interactive video	6.1	39.0	40.2	14.6
18. Selection of media	24.4	41.5	33.0	1.2
19. Use of AV equipment	22.0	41.5	30.5	6.1
20. Design and production of graphics	7.3	35.4	45.1	12.2
21. Management skills	31.7	47.6	15.9	4.9
22. Oral communication skills	84.1	12.2	3.7	0
23. Written communications skills	69.5	25.6	3.7	1.2
24. Cost-benefit analysis	12.2	43.9	34.1	9.8
25. Facility selection/design	2.4	48.8	42.7	6.1
26. Research design	1.2	22.0	62.2	14.6
27. Research reports	4.9	15.9	58.5	20.7
28. Applications of theory to training	20.7	50.0	23.1	6.1
29. Program administration	13.4	52.4	29.3	4.9
30. Long-range planning	20.7	48.8	28.0	2.4
31. Marketing strategies/techniques	22.0	40.2	29.3	8.5
32. Development of written simulations, role plays, case studies	31.7	50.0	15.9	2.4
33. Development of training manuals	31.7	51.2	14.6	2.4
34. Facilitating the application of training content	45.1	35.4	13.4	6.1

The competencies were then ranked from highest to lowest mean scores as shown in Figure 3. Using an arbitrary mean score of 1.5 as a cut-off point, the data indicated that there were six competencies which the respondents viewed as not very important to training professionals:

Computer assisted instruction  
Facility selection/design  
Design and production of graphics  
Interactive video  
Research design  
Research reports

The low rankings of computer assisted instruction and interactive video are consistent with responses received regarding these modes of instruction in the Ralphs and Stephan Study. Research competencies were clearly seen as not being very useful. Practitioners would not see these as essential to a training curriculum.

Sixteen competencies had mean scores above 2.0. For curriculum planning purposes, these should be included in the core of a program to prepare training professionals. The wide variety of competencies which received high rankings seems consistent with the variety of roles which training professionals generally perform. Respondents, with few exceptions, indicated that they generally had current responsibilities in at least three of the roles listed on the questionnaire, with several checking all categories.

The remaining twelve competencies, with means between 1.5 and 2.0, were seen as being less universally useful by training professionals. While there were respondents who found them extremely useful, there were also respondents who found them significantly less useful. For curriculum planning purposes, these may represent areas which should be offered, but not necessarily as part of the required core curriculum.

Figure 3Competencies for Trainers - Ranked

	$\bar{x}$
Oral Communications Skills	2.80
Group Facilitation Skills	2.65
Written Communication Skills	2.63
Platform Presentation Skills	2.49
Needs Assessment Techniques	2.46
Evaluation Techniques	2.38
Adult Learning Theory	2.37
Skill & Knowledge Assessment Techniques	2.32
Development of Educational Materials	2.29
Facilitating the Application of Training Content	2.20
Program Design Process (Overview)	2.20
Curriculum Design	2.13
Development of Training Manuals	2.12
Development of Written Simulations, Role Play, etc.	2.11
Written Educational Objectives	2.09
Management Skills	2.06
Learning Theory	1.96
Selection of Media	1.89
Long-Range Planning	1.88
Knowledge of Organizational Structures	1.87
Applications of Theory to Training	1.85
Use of AV Equipment	1.79
Marketing Strategies/Techniques	1.76
Program Administration	1.74
Adult Development	1.72
Computer Based Training	1.59
Cost-Benefit Analysis	1.59
Budgeting Techniques	1.56
Computer Assister Instruction	1.48
Facility Selection/Design	1.48
Design & Production of Graphics	1.38
Interactive Video	1.37
Research Design	1.10
Research Reports	1.05

Only two respondents supplied additional competencies. The additional competencies identified were:

- Organizational behavior\*
- Organizational development processes
- Model research
- Current research in human development
- Forecasting
- Impact of visuals on training
- Use of multi-media including music
- Industrial-organizational psychology
- Creativity development
- Problem solving process
- Change process

\*mentioned by two respondents

There was too little date to effectively analyze these added competencies.

Overall, the findings of this study were very consistent with the findings of the ASTD Study and the Eaves Study. Additionally, there were no glaring inconsis encies between this study, which was concerned primarily with small and medium sized firms and the Ralphs and Stephan Study of Fortune 500 companies.

#### IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

For institutions engaged in the curriculum planning process for an emerging field such as training, a study such as this can provide information which will be helpful in determining the reliability of findings from other, more global studies for the relevant geographic market under current conditions for their particular institutions. While it is only one small part of the complex curriculum development process, it is an essential part.

## Appendix A

The following model describes the knowledge/skill areas which the ASTD Competency Study has identified as important for excellent performance in the Training and Development field.

There are thirty-one (31) competencies in this model:

1. *Adult Learning Understanding* . . . Knowing how adults acquire and use knowledge, skills, attitudes. Understanding individual differences in learning.
2. *A/V Skill* . . . Selecting and using audio/visual hardware and software.
3. *Career Development Knowledge* . . . Understanding the personal and organizational issues and practices relevant to individual careers.
4. *Competency Identification Skill* . . . Identifying the knowledge and skill requirements of jobs, tasks, roles.
5. *Computer Competence* . . . Understanding and being able to use computers.
6. *Cost-Benefit Analysis Skill* . . . Assessing alternatives in terms of their financial, psychological, and strategic advantages and disadvantages.
7. *Counseling Skill* . . . Helping individuals recognize and understand personal needs, values, problems, alternatives and goals.
8. *Data Reduction Skill* . . . Scanning, synthesizing, and drawing conclusions from data.
9. *Delegation Skill* . . . Assigning task responsibility and authority to others.
10. *Facilities Skill* . . . Planning and coordinating logistics in an efficient and cost-effective manner.
11. *Feedback Skill* . . . Communicating opinions, observations and conclusions such that they are understood.
12. *Futuring Skill* . . . Projecting trends and visualizing possible and probable futures and their implications.
13. *Group Process Skill* . . . Influencing groups to both accomplish tasks and fulfill the needs of their members.
14. *Industry Understanding* . . . Knowing the key concepts and variables that define an industry or sector (e.g., critical issues, economic vulnerabilities, measurements, distribution channels, inputs, outputs, information sources).
15. *Intellectual Versatility* . . . Recognizing, exploring and using a broad range of ideas and practices. Thinking logically and creatively without undue influence from personal biases.
16. *Library Skills* . . . Gathering information from printed and other recorded sources. Identifying and using information specialists and reference services and aids.
17. *Model Building Skill* . . . Developing theoretical and practical frameworks which describe complex ideas in understandable, usable ways.
18. *Negotiation Skill* . . . Securing win-win agreements while successfully representing a special interest in a decision situation.
19. *Objectives Preparation Skill* . . . Preparing clear statements which describe desired outputs.
20. *Organization Behavior Understanding* . . . Seeing organizations as dynamic, political, economic, and social systems which have multiple goals; using this larger perspective as a framework for understanding and influencing events and change.
21. *Organization Understanding* . . . Knowing the strategy, structure, power networks, financial position, systems of a SPECIFIC organization.
22. *Performance Observation Skills* . . . Tracking and describing behaviors and their effects.
23. *Personnel/HR Field Understanding* . . . Understanding issues and practices in other HR areas (Organization Development, Organization Job Design, Human Resource Planning, Selection and Staffing, Personnel Research and Information Systems, Compensation and Benefits, Employee Assistance, Union/Labor Relations).
24. *Presentation Skills* . . . Verbally presenting information such that the intended purpose is achieved.
25. *Questioning Skill* . . . Gathering information from and stimulating insight in individuals and groups through the use of interviews, questionnaires and other probing methods.
26. *Records Management Skill* . . . Storing data in easily retrievable form.
27. *Relationship Versatility* . . . Adjusting behavior in order to establish relationships across a broad range of people and groups.
28. *Research Skills* . . . Selecting, developing and using methodologies, statistical and data collection techniques for a formal inquiry.
29. *Training and Development Field Understanding* . . . Knowing the technological, social, economic, professional, and regulatory issues in the field; understanding the role T&D plays in helping individuals learn for current and future jobs.
30. *Training and Development Techniques Understanding* . . . Knowing the techniques and methods used in training; understanding their appropriate uses.
31. *Writing Skills* . . . Preparing written material which follows generally accepted rules of style and form, is appropriate for the audience, creative, and accomplishes its intended purposes.

Training and Development Competencies, Models for Excellence, The American Society for Training and Development, 1983, p. 36.

September 18, 1987

Dear Training Professional:

The enclosed questionnaire is intended to generate information on the competencies needed by trainers as seen by training professionals. The data generated will be part of a research project designed to help to identify ways in which Illinois State University and the Department of Business Education and Administrative Services can meet the educational needs of prospective and practicing training professionals in central Illinois. The Department has recently added an undergraduate sequence in education and training and two courses which can be taken for graduate credit. Currently, we are examining the possibility of adding a master's program and/or a non-credit certificate program.

Responses to the questionnaire will be reported in aggregate form only. Results of the study will be presented at the annual meeting of the Human Resource Development section of the American Association of Adult and Continuing Education.

The questionnaire has been kept brief to facilitate response. Please feel free to add categories and include any comments you may have. A postpaid return envelope has been included for your convenience. Please respond by September 30.

Thank you for your assistance. If you have any questions, please call me at (309) 438-7205.

Sincerely,

Teresa M. Palmer  
Associate Professor

TMP/lew

**Questionnaire**  
**Desirable Competencies for Trainers**

Please indicate your assessment of the usefulness of the items listed below for training professionals.

	Extremely Useful	Useful	Somewhat Useful	Of little or No Use
1. Learning theory	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Adult learning theory	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Adult development	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Program design process (overview)	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Needs assessment techniques	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Curriculum design	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Knowledge of organizational structures	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Skill and knowledge assessment techniques	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. Evaluation techniques	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. Budgeting techniques	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. Writing educational objectives	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. Platform presentation skills	_____	_____	_____	_____
13. Group facilitation skills	_____	_____	_____	_____
14. Development of educational materials	_____	_____	_____	_____
15. Computer based training	_____	_____	_____	_____
16. Computer assisted instruction	_____	_____	_____	_____
17. Interactive video	_____	_____	_____	_____
18. Selection of media	_____	_____	_____	_____
19. Use of AV equipment	_____	_____	_____	_____
20. Design and production of graphics	_____	_____	_____	_____
21. Management skills	_____	_____	_____	_____
22. Oral communication skills	_____	_____	_____	_____

- |   |       |       |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 23. Written communications skills                                   | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 24. Cost-Benefit analysis   | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 25. Facility selection/design                                       | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 26. Research design   | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 27. Research reports  | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 28. Applications of theory to training                              | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 29. Program administration  | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 30. Long-range planning   | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 31. Marketing strategies/techniques                                 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 32. Development of written simulations,<br>role plays, case studies | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 33. Development of training manuals                                 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 34. Facilitating the application of<br>training content             | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 35. Other   | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Which of the following role or roles best describe(s) your current responsibilities?

- |  |
|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Program designer                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Instructor/Facilitator                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Administrator in training and development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Instructional writer                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resource specialist                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____                     |

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